

Unlike some other federal courthouse projects, the cost per square foot of the Central Islip Courthouse is well below the GSA average for similar projects. The courthouse will be cost effective, saving taxpayers huge amounts now paid for rent.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and sufficient funding for the timely completion of the Central Islip Federal Courthouse.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2020, the Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations bill, but my enthusiasm for it is tempered by the cuts in valuable programs this legislation proposes.

As a former member of this subcommittee, I feel that the agencies that are funded by this legislation are extremely important to our government. Agencies like the Treasury Department, and its component divisions such as the Customs Service, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, the IRS, the Secret Service and others are extremely important to the efficient functioning of our federal government. This legislation also funds the Executive Office of the President, a portion of the Postal Service, and some independent agencies such as the Federal Election Commission, the Federal Labor Relations Commission, the General Services Administration and others.

Because of the importance of all of the above, I am extremely disheartened by some of the cuts this bill makes to some of these agencies. For example, the bill proposes to eliminate the Council of Economic Advisers. The Council has served presidents of both parties for the past 50 years. This group provides long-term economic advice to the President that is both impartial and apolitical. This kind of advice is increasingly important during a time when economic advice a president gets is usually laced with political undertones.

I am also bothered by the reductions made to the Federal Election Commission [FEC] in an upcoming presidential election year. The \$2.5 million reduction made to the FEC combined with an earmark of \$1.5 million for computer modernization will interfere with the ability of FEC to carry out its duties and ensure the integrity of the upcoming elections. This is not the only agency that suffers a reduction in its budget. Other agencies take significant cuts to their budgets that will affect their ability to carry out their functions.

This bill is also silent on Federal pay. Neither the President nor the Committee has provided the full 5.9 percent increase that the Civil Service is due as employment cost index and locality pay increases under the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act. Since 1981, Federal employees have lost more than \$163 billion in pay and benefits that they were scheduled to receive.

The 2.4 percent raise recommended by the President, which is adopted by this bill, is not fully funded. Even further, this is less than half of the raise owed to Federal workers under existing law. Agencies not involved in law enforcement are forced to absorb the additional cost of the pay increase from their program budgets. This unwise policy results in a hidden 2.4 percent cut in programs at agencies that are already facing severe budget constraints.

Another provision that bothers me directed toward Federal employees is the majority's decision to reinstate a provision in the bill which restricts a Federal employee's choice of a health care insurance plan by prohibiting

"Federal funds" from being used to purchase a policy which provides coverage for pregnancy termination, except in instances where the life of the mother is at risk.

Let me be clear, Mr. Chairman, that there are no Federal funds used for the purchasing of health care coverage for Federal employees. The compensation of Federal employees is in the form of salary, health care benefits and retirement benefits. Like private sector employees, they can use their compensation as they see fit. Federal workers choose a health insurance plan and a portion of that is paid for with their health coverage benefit. There are no "Federal funds" involved when a Federal employee decides what to do with his/her salary. The choice of policies is the employee's alone. The reasoning of the Committee that it is the employer's right to restrict the scope of coverage for legal medical services is wrong.

This tampering with the rights of Federal employees is wrong because they are one of our Nation's greatest assets. They are important to my congressional district where they number approximately 13,000 persons. Federal employees are among the finest, most honorable workers in this country. Yet, in this House, many insist on perpetuating an attitude of hostility toward Federal employees. They call them lazy bureaucrats, government vultures or worthless do-nothing Federal employees. This is wrong, Mr. Chairman, and it must be stopped. It should not take an incident like the Oklahoma bombing to change the minds of many in this country with regards to Federal employees.

While I have thus far focused on items I have not liked in this legislation, it does not have some good points. For one, the bill funds the Customs Service at a level that exceeds the President's request. I feel this is important because the Customs Service has a difficult job as the Nation's principal border agency. Customs' responsibilities run the gamut from fighting the scourge of illegal drug trafficking to assessing and collecting duties and tariffs. I would also like to mention that the Customs Service section of the report included items of importance to my congressional district. For instance, there is language supporting: additional Customs inspectors for El Paso, Texas, unified port management, and drug interdiction technologies such as cargo x-ray systems and FLIR's for UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

The report also includes \$560,000 for security improvements to the El Paso Federal Building. Other items of interest to my congressional district include report language supporting the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program, the Southwest Border High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, and Operation Alliance.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend the leadership of Chairman LIGHTFOOT. Throughout our hearings and deliberations, the Chairman was very fair and amenable by allowing of minority views and consideration. I am very grateful for his policy of "opening up" the hearings to questioning after allotted time for testimony had expired. The other members of the subcommittee, are also to be complemented for their diligence in pursuing the issues under the subcommittee's jurisdiction. I also would like to thank the staff of both sides for the hard work they displayed in putting together this legislation. They worked many long

hours to put together the final product we are debating today.

Mr. Chairman, I will support H.R. 2020, but it is my hope that some of the troubling provisions I have mentioned will be moderated by the Senate and we can settle those differences in conference.

Mr. LIGHTFOOT. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma) having assumed the chair, Mr. DREIER, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2020) making appropriations for the Treasury Department, the United States Postal Service, the Executive Office of the President, and certain Independent Agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

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PERMISSION FOR CERTAIN COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES TO SIT TODAY DURING 5-MINUTE RULE

Mr. LIGHTFOOT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the following committees and their subcommittees be permitted to sit today while the House is meeting in the Committee of the Whole House under the 5-minute rule: the Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Commerce, the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, the Committee on House Oversight, the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Resources, the Committee on Small Business, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

It is my understanding that the minority has been consulted and there are no objections.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

Mr. HOYER. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, and I will not object, it is my understanding the minority has been consulted about each and every one of these exceptions to the rule that we adopted in the beginning of the year, and we will not object.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.